

For a Thousand Generations

The Jedi Knights were Powerful & Respected Throughout the Galaxy for a Thousand Generations

The technology of lightsabers is almost as old as the order of Jedi Knights. And the Jedi, as is well known, have served as guardians of peace and justice throughout the Galaxy for over 25,000 years.

The technology of lightsabers is very old indeed!

The Jedi weapon that Leia received from the fallen Jedi Vima-Da-Soda is about 10,000 years old. This lightsaber was given to Vima by her own Master, who received it from his Master, who didn't say where she obtained it.

But in fact, we know that this particular lightsaber surfaced about 800 years ago, in an archaeological dig on the planet Ossus in the Adega System.

Ossus was an important Jedi stronghold in most ancient times. Some scholars have speculated that the Order of Jedi Knights began on Ossus. But mysteriously, all the cities of Ossus were abandoned and left to decay about 7,000 years ago.

Today Ossus is a mysterious place -- a planet of ruins, populated by a gentle, primitive folk, who may or may not be descended from the original inhabitants.

Were the lightsabers of old any different than the lightsabers of today?

"Such an Old Lightsword is Not a Worthy Weapon For You!"

According to *The Galactic Encyclopedia*:

When a Jedi Lightsaber is activated, a charge of pure energy flows from a power cell through a series of jewels that focus the energy into a tight parallel beam. The beam passes through a lens at the center of the handle, extends into space, and then arcs back along itself to a high-energy flux aperture mounted in the saber's handguard. The tightly arcing beam forms a blade of amazing strength. The length of the beam is directly proportional to its energy level.

Each saber beam has a unique frequency which determines the "feel" of the blade and how it handles when cutting or when contacting another blade. The frequency also determines the blade's color and sound. The oldest sabers use jewels formed by natural processes. But the Jedi can forge synthetic jewels with a small furnace, a few basic elements...and the power of the Force.

The lightsaber has continued to evolve, at least until the time of the Empire. The most sophisticated weapons use miniature molecular power cells and superconducting circuits. The energy efficiency of the modern lightsaber is very close to 100%.

In most ancient times, when the lightsaber was invented, warriors did not possess the sophisticated technology of today. The very earliest lightsabers were based on the discovery of natural crystals that spontaneously emit powerful bursts of light and energy at their resonant frequency.

It was the Jedi who discovered these crystals and learned to harness their power, using more common jeweled stones to direct the raw energy bursts into a coherent beam. The crystals were found in only one place -- the Adega System.

The Ancient Jedi Were Powerful -- But They Were Supplanted By the Dark Side

There is something always *magical* about the old Jedi weapons. To hold one in your hands is to commune with a time when the light of the Force burned very, very brightly in the hearts of the Jedi. This was a time when the dark side of the Force was but an insubstantial shadow, utterly ineffective against the powers of the Jedi Knights.

How things have changed in the aeons since! Today the glories of freedom and the light of justice are nearly forgotten everywhere in the galaxy. The dark side has grown powerful, the old ways are fading, and the Jedi are almost extinct.

And yet the Jedi have a saying: *In a time of greatest adversity, the greatest Jedi will be born!*

So it is that a man, Luke Skywalker, heir to a 25,000-year-old tradition, has found the courage to challenge the dark side on its own ground.

Luke has made the dangerous choice to learn the *secrets* of the dark side. For this Jedi, it was the only way.

The Emperor's Darkest Secrets...

Satisfied that his "young apprentice" has crossed the threshold from which there is no returning, the Emperor unveils his *teaching*, and Luke is given the *knowledge* that was bestowed on his father before him!

Dark side wisdom is strangely practical, crude and even uninspired. Its entire purpose is the perfection of the *will* and the expansion of *personal power*. It is a knowledge that can be terribly seductive, because of the ease with which specific powers and abilities are attained.

The true Jedi knows that powers that come easily are only the beginning of understanding. A Jedi is warned not to cling to these powers and to move on to the more difficult levels of training.

Those who are seduced by the dark side know only that their individual *will* has been enhanced. All that is required, for them, is a sensitivity to the energies of the Force... and an act of surrender to the path of anger and violence, regardless of the consequences to others.

The Emperor has become a Master of the Dark Will and its abilities. He is even writing a *Dark Side Compendium* that he claims will eventually fill several hundred volumes. In this compendium, the Emperor has so far defined two principal "empires" of dark side lore.

The Emperor's first book, *The Book of Anger*, is about the initial surrender to the dark side and the exercise of the will over the energies of the Force for destructive ends.

His second book, *The Weakness of Inferiors*, teaches, in great detail, about the psychology and politics of power.

(A third book, still in manuscript, is called *The Creation of Monsters*.)

The Book of Anger

The Emperor's "first empire" evolved from several sources. Many Jedi secrets were revealed by trained Jedi who capitulated to the dark side. Other secrets, more ancient, were obtained from the Jedi Holocron. A third source was the archaic magical concepts that were known and used (and are still known and used) by the most primitive peoples.

According to the Emperor, when the Force is sensed and moved by emotion, from the very center of the body, and meditated from the lower vital centers of the being, it acts with the destructive power of a storm... and the savagery of a beast.

Anger is considered the most potent catalyst to this kind of power. And anger becomes rage, when channeled through the "vital gate" in the center of the body, and can unleash absolutely unstoppable potency throughout the body.

Add the exquisite control of a fine intelligence standing watch over anger, and you have aggression that can kill with precision, crush cartilage from afar, ... or (he claims) murder opponents from a great distance.

The Weakness of Inferiors

The second major work to date is devoted to the secrets of control, without violence, over the innocent, the ignorant, and "all inferiors."

It is this arrogant teaching of which the Emperor is most proud, for he developed it entirely himself, out of his own experience. Without hesitation he reveals it to Luke, so sure is he that Luke, like his father before him, will be drawn into its seductive embrace.

We quote the Emperor's main tenets on the subject:

- 1) ALL POWER COMES FROM OUTSIDE THE WEAK. The weak have never been known to believe in themselves or in their ability to wield power.
- 2) THE FACE OF AUTHORITY. The weak live as in a dream. All their thoughts, actions, and urges are governed by the face and the voice that controls this dream. The face and voice they have learned to obey. The face and voice of *Authority*.
- 3) THE LAW OF FEAR. A consequence of the first two tenets is that the weak live in fear. The mere suggestion of violence from one in authority is enough to inspire their obedience. How can one who doesn't believe in his own powers stand against the power of another? It is impossible.
- 4) THE WEAK DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE FORCE. The Force is the ultimate means to gain authority over the weak. The weak do not understand the Force. The weak do not sense the Force, therefore how can they understand or use the Force? So it is that the weak are at the mercy of those who know and use the power of the Force. The proper use of the Force can inspire awe and obedience in the weak.

It has been said that *anyone* who knows the ways of the Force can set himself up as a King on any world where only he knows the ways of the Force. Any Jedi could do this. But the Jedi, fools that they are, adhere to a religion in which the Force is used only in the service of others.

How short-sighted of them. Is that not why they lost the galaxy to the dark side?!

Sitting at the feet of the Emperor, Luke hears these words from the Emperor's own lips, inflected with a sneer and punctuated with a wicked laugh.

"Do you see, young Skywalker? Your father was right the first time! The dark side is the true path for a Jedi... All other choices lead to extinction!"

"My Clones Are the Future of the Galaxy"

And yet, for all his boasting, Emperor Palpatine has paid a great price. The energies of the dark side eat away at the very fiber and flesh of his being. Yes, he grows continually more powerful in the way of the dark side. But he also sickens, for the powers of the dark side are vast, and ultimately they twist into a vortex of annihilation, destroying the body and drawing one into a terrifying, disembodied state.

Dying and decrepit, the Emperor felt himself being pulled inexorably toward that end. It was a "fate worse than death." for disembodiment in the dark side is perpetual madness, as if to live forever like an open wound, without respite... It was a fate the Emperor wanted to postpone at all costs.

Fortunately (from his point of view), he found the Jedi Holocron. Fortunately (from his point of view), there was the science of cloning. Fortunately, death and its dive into, annihilation could be postponed... perhaps forever.

"Your Father Knew the Dark Side Well"

Luke is, perhaps, learning more about the dark side than he wants to know. The more the Emperor reveals, the more Luke is repulsed. The sheer depravity of the man would shake the soul of the strongest Jedi.

But Luke must continually remind himself of his vow to conquer the dark side from within. Luke's father understood these secrets, these powers, and willingly used them to crush, and enslave multitudes of galactic citizens.

"Your father knew the dark side well... especially my teachings of weakness. How he could inspire fear! Yes.. you have that talent...you are a Skywalker, after all... You can be like him... You can be greater than he was!"

Can Luke Really Conquer the Dark Side?

"I have taken the first steps down the road that my father took... What if I fail in my purpose? What if I lose my grip, what if I become exactly like him? What if I become an enslaver, a despot...or a murderer?"

"But my father -- my real father -- is free. And Darth Vader is *dead*."

Reminding himself of that, Luke finds the strength to go on with his daring mission. While pretending to be the apt and willing student of the Emperor, Luke does everything he can to sabotage the Emperor's attack on Mon Calamari!

As Supreme Commander of the Imperial Forces, Luke has access to the top-secret codes that govern the Emperor's new World Devastators from afar.

The codes are beamed through a priority hyperspace communications channel to the onboard computers that control every aspect of the Devastators' operation and function.

When Lando Calrissian and Wedge Antilles watch a great Devastator go down in the Mon Calamari Sea, Lando knows something strange is going on -- "Whoever's in charge of those monsters is an idiot! You'd almost think he wants to lose!"

Indeed, the man in charge does want to lose. Because his name is Luke Skywalker, he is a Jedi Master, and he is working for the Rebel Alliance!

The Emperor Has Taken Luke's Betrayal Into Account

Does the Emperor know of his protégé's lack of obedience? Of course he does.

"I expected to take some damage from him. Any worthy opponent is going to inflict injury... If he doesn't, he's not worth troubling with!"

"Let a few Devastators be destroyed. Let Skywalker think he's getting the best of me. As long as he believes he's succeeding, I have him in my grasp.

"And as long as I hold him, the more vulnerable he becomes, to the unfathomable power of the dark side..."

"Think what he'll do when he is fully mine -- when he is working for the Empire, working to help us win!"

Conferring with his most trusted officers, the Emperor counters every move that Luke makes. Quietly the Emperor cuts his losses and maximizes his wins over his opponent.

"One day soon Skywalker will wake up and find that he can no longer go back to his friends. He will look in a mirror and he will see his true face, the face of power...the face of the dark side."

This first appeared as text pages at the end of Dark Empire #4, by Tom Veitch and Cam Kennedy, published by Dark Horse Comics in 1992.